

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Updated: April 14, 2006

The primary 2006 Southwest Area fire season will be above normal in terms of the Geographic Area's impact on national firefighting resources. This will be characterized by a season of near normal onset and duration, but of unusual intensity and scope during May and June. Fire potential is expected to be above normal across all elevations and fuel types over the majority of the Geographic Area during this time frame, with elevated initial attack and large fire development. The potential for fires in the timber fuel types will be particularly high relative to normal. Contributing factors and considerations are as follows:

- Recent moisture and an active storm track through much of April will delay widespread significant fire activity until May and cause greenup of fine herbaceous fuels across a significant portion of the area.
- The occurrence of above normal precipitation in 2005 within a period of long term drought has resulted in an above normal amount of carryover fine fuels combined with below normal moisture levels in existing larger dead and live fuels.
- Precipitation was insignificant over the 2005-2006 winter, with much below normal snowpack as of early April despite recent storm activity.
- May and June are forecast to be dry and abnormally warm, which will combine with the unusually dry fuel conditions to cause a rapid escalation of fire potential in all fuel regimes. (see Figure 2 – second page)
- Moisture is expected to begin increasing east of the continental divide by late May or early June, particularly across eastern New Mexico and west Texas.
- The Monsoon is expected to begin early or on time and provide ample rainfall.
- Significant fire potential is expected to remain high in much of Arizona through mid-July, but should be mitigated across the remainder of the area by that time.

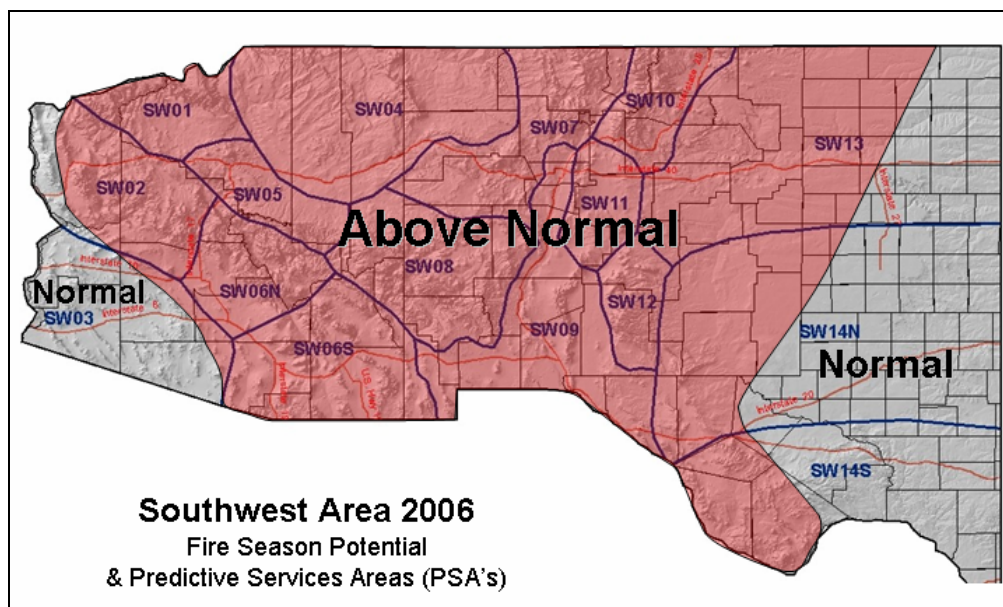


Figure 1 – Areal depiction of overall fire season potential

FIRE ACTIVITY ASSESSMENT

- Approximately 221,000 acres have already burned in the Southwest Area, mostly in southern Arizona and eastern New Mexico.
- In terms of current and forecast weather and fuel conditions, the year 1996 is the most similar to what we expect in 2006.
- A notable difference in the comparison between 1996 and 2006 is that significantly less fire activity is expected this April due to periodic moisture with storm systems continuing to move through the area.
- The following are expected for the 2006 season (April – June) compared to the average ('90 – '05).
 - Fire activity will be confined to southern Arizona, southern and eastern New Mexico and west Texas through April, then shift rapidly to encompass most of Arizona and New Mexico during May and June.
 - The total number of fires is expected to be near to slightly more than the average.
 - The total number of acres is expected to be 0% to 40% more than the average.
 - The number of large fires (>100 acres) is expected to be near or greater than the average of 50.
 - More large fires will require at least one Incident Management Team to oversee the incident compared to the average of 12.
- **2006 is shaping up to be a very active and intense fire season, with a near normal duration and onset.**

2006 EXPECTED FIRES AND ACRES ESTIMATE (April – June*)

Southwest Area	Total Fires	Total Acres
Total Fires & Acres	2,256	178,142
Average ('90-'05)	2,061	177,266
Median ('90-'05)	1,949	127,209
% of Average	109%	100%
% of Median	116%	140%

* Note: Estimates based on 1996 fire statistics for April through June, as adjusted for 2006. Also note that the 221,000 acres reported in the Southwest Area prior to April 1, 2006 were not considered in this assessment.

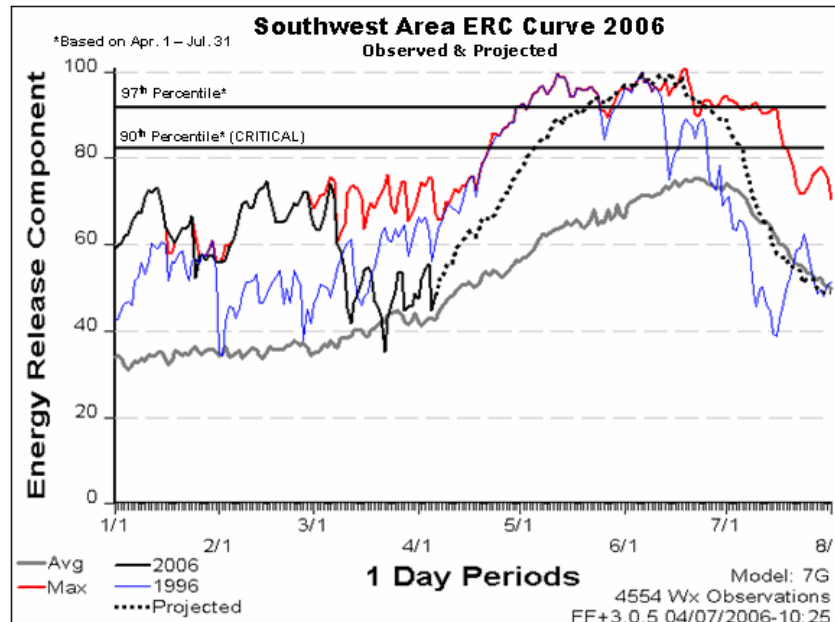


Figure 2 – Observed and projected 2006 fire season severity